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ABSTRACT

The Full-Year Asian Language Concentration (FALCON) program was designed for students who need an intensive program in Chinese to make them proficient enough for graduate study. Using L1, FALCON teaches students to express adult concepts in L2. Since good writing requires a great degree of proficiency, it is neglected initially for the sake of a balance between speaking and reading. More time is spent on speaking to help familiarize the student with various dialects and because active speaking develops more language skills than does passive reading. The volume of reading done shows the student the vast difference in style between spoken and written Chinese. Only Chinese is spoken in oral drill sessions, while the native language is used to explain grammatical points and to gloss Chinese words in order to assure that the student fully comprehends the new material. (PJM)

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The Full-year Asian Language Concentration

FALCON Program in Chinese Language at

Cornell University

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FALCON

May 1979

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The Full-Year Asian Language Concentration (FALCON) Program in Chinese at Cornell University

Introduction

The FALCON Program was started at Cornell University in the summer of 1972 as a unique effort to bring intensive Mandarin language study to any person who might need such training. The program has been offered every year since that time and has clearly demonstrated that the need for such a course is a continuing part of the American academic scene. World events and developments in student goals indicate that the FALCON Program will be needed for some time into the future.

The original intent of FALCON was to provide an intensive language training opportunity for those students who came late into the field of Chinese studies and found themselves with no way to get adequate control of this difficult language in time to be of use to them in their graduate studies. In French and Spanish and the more commonly taught European languages it was possible for an American student to have early exposure in college or even in high school so that a person electing to continue in degree work or postgraduate study in the same field could be assured of appropriate research control of these languages early in his schooling. In Chinese there was little chance of studying either the language or the area courses before the student had matriculated at one of a small number of colleges and universities around the country. Thus it frequently happened that a student found himself at a later stage of his academic career before he received enough contact with things Chinese to realize that he wanted to concentrate on Chinese studies. At this point it was often too late to get the amount of Chinese language training that an advanced

degree program really needed. Students in this situation traditionally continued along in slower language courses and ultimately graduated with less than useful control of the Chinese required for their research. FALCON was designed specifically for these late arrivals who needed language competency in a hurry and who were ineligible for such training in the Foreign Service Institute or the military schools.

From the very first year it was evident that FALCON would appeal to a number of people outside the university system. Now in its ninth year FALCON serves primarily the academic community but students have enrolled every year from business, government, or military backgrounds. This proves that the basic course design can be effective for persons of widely disparate goals and that command of Chinese language is a growing need in various fields in our country.

Although non-academics now take the same course in Mandarin that was designed for university students, it is clear that we would be able to design at any time a special individualized course for any group with particular language requirements. We have in fact served as consultants for organizations who have approached us for special Mandarin programs to suit their individual needs.

Scheduling FALCON in an Academic Career

The question has been asked when should a student plan to put FALCON into his academic career. To date students have enrolled in the program at every stage from beginning freshman to advanced Ph.D. candidate. Clearly a student with an immediate need will take FALCON at whatever point in his schooling that the time is available. However, as indicated above, the FALCON program is seen as an answer to the problems of the late-comer to

Chinese Studies and this usually means the junior or senior in college or the person just ready to enter advanced degree work in Chinese Studies. We feel that Chinese studies in the United States will improve across the board when every MA and Ph.D. candidate is able to use Chinese, both written and spoken, as a reliable and comfortable research tool throughout his graduate study career. It is usual to expect the undergraduate in French studies to be able to read and speak good French yet at the same time let the Ph.D. candidate in Chinese Studies go to the end of his research with little reliable control of Chinese language. Of course Chinese is considerably more difficult to master than French; this simply means that a student of Chinese studies should understand that he will spend a year or two longer mastering his chosen subject. There must be no watering down of the standards simply because the subject is difficult. FALCON is seen as an important element in an attempt to upgrade the skills of American graduates from Chinese Studies programs.

Advantages of Beginning in the United States

We face the constant suggestion that intensive language study should start in the native environment where all persons whom the student meets will be speakers of the target language. We of FALCON strongly disagree with this common misconception and believe that experience has proved that the implications of the suggestion are false. The reasoning of those who propose an immediate move to beginning language study in the country of native speakers is based on the assumption that constant exposure to adult and natural forms of the language speed up the learning process. Underlying it all seems to be the conviction that languages should be learned the way children learn them, that is by totally immersing oneself in the world of native speakers.

We all have heard of or know persons who are held up as examples of the speakers of fluent Chinese that can be learned by going straight to China and picking up the language on the street. The few who exist are enough to give support to the mistaken belief that everyone should do it this way.

Designed for Adult Learners

The main arguments against the scheduling of the first year of language study in the native country are that it is most likely to be an inefficient, unsystematic, and pedagogically unsound way to learn a language. In the days before any scientific understanding of the language learning process this may have been the best, if not the only, way to learn any foreign language. Today, and especially in the last ten years, we have learned so much more about applied linguistics and the psychology of language learning that we can readily design a program much more rational and effective than one which repeats the child's process of language acquisition. In the first place, it is often forgotten that the child does not have an easy job learning his own language. It takes at least five years for him to get the basics of phonology, word formation, syntax, and lexicon and another five years to move out of the stage of infantile conversation. Of course much of this time lag is based on the fact that the developing child does not have the understanding of the complex matters which concern the adult and would not be discussing them even if he had the necessary language control . But this is exactly an important reason for the conviction that we should treat adult language learners as different from children and design courses that approach the adult mentality rather than one which recapitulates both the language development and the mental maturation process of the child.

We can and should skip much of the childish beginnings of language learning and move in at a mature level. Second language learning by an adult need not and should not recapitulate ontogeny. Child language learning is inefficient and can be much improved on by modern course design. Child language learning requires the processing and rejection of much more material than is ultimately retained and used by the dhild; it is an analysis and selection process that takes many years to reach control of mature language. One advantage for the adult lies in our ability to select what is maximally useful for the beginning language learner and save him the trouble of learning everything he hears. The selection and reduction process is done with information unavailable to the naive language learner who can then concentrate on language elements of higher frequency and a phonology of wider acceptability.

Problems of Beginning Language in Native Environment

All the arguments against following the child's course in language learning tend to apply equally to the adult beginner who goes first to the area where the language is spoken. This student is faced with the totality of a language, i.e., all the vocabulary, constructions, and irregularities which the average adult uses in speaking a complex and changing system of communication. No foreigner in this environment can tell what is basic vocabulary, what is ephemeral slang, what is vulgar speech inappropriate for an obvious foreigner, what is dialect variation with sociolinguistic implications, what is polite or rude under certain subtle personal relationships, and so on. Of course almost anyone can learn all this in time but the beginning student faces a long and painful period of trial and error if he proposes to solve all this intricacy of a language without professional

help.

For every successful person who comes back from such language learning in a foreign country we could point out dozens who tried the same thing and failed miserably. Worse still, they frequently think that they succeeded and lack enough language awareness to see that they are speaking unacceptable Chinese (or whatever language). These are often the basket cases who must be totally retrained from the beginning and are faced with the double task of unlearning before relearning can begin. Even the ones who seem to have succeeded are often found to have a fluent, even beautiful, control of a limited area of Chinese. These are the people who are impressive in the market or the restaurant but who flounder on a simple question about a common topic of conversation. These are the familiar cases of spectacular intensive control in a narrow range but no true extensive familiarity with the wide scope required for fuller access to the culture and people. This is not to belittle such self-made speakers so much as to point out that a well designed language program can accomplish the same thing better with less wasted effort and with fewer failures among the potential students. The feeling that the first year is best spent in the foreign country misses the points that the native speaking milieu is unlikely to be the best environment for the beginner and that the foreign school is less likely to have the English language background which is necessary for phrasing various problems in terms of the student's own first language. Also, to date there are few overseas schools where the staff has the training in modern applied linguistics and pedagogical techniques developed over the past few years, innovations which have really made a qualitative difference in language teaching in American and England.

As a final point on the foreign school question, an intensive program such as FALCON assumes almost total commitment to classwork and homework during the first year. This leaves so little time for outside activity that a student would have minimal contact with a native culture even if one surrounded him. The point here is that an ideal first year intensive program takes up so much of a student's time that locale takes on secondary importance. Under these circumstances the course may as well be offered in the most convenient place where the largest number of trained linguists and language teaching specialists are assembled. One also tends to forget the importance of English as the base for early explanations and contrastive grammar lectures.

Finally, there is the point that a student in a beginning intensive Chinese program in America has not committed himself to distant travel and relocation which would be both inconvenient and expensive if the first few weeks should prove that the study of intensive Chinese is too much for him. This is also the reason why Cornell has scheduled the first period of intensive Chinese for the summer rather than a regular academic semester. In this way, the student can try the intensive language study approach and still be able to back out, enter the regular fall semester and study at a more leisurely pace. He has not committed himself to a full year of full time language study but only to one summer before the decision to extend must be made. Many students take only the first summer session then change back to a regular program. It should also be pointed out, however, that many students take the summer session solely as an experiment and stay on to do the full year of Chinese FALCON after they evaluate their summer progress.

Speaking and Reading Balanced

Chinese FALCON gives equal weight to the two components of speaking and reading. Since the course is designed with the educated adult and continuing academic in mind it is insisted that this person do as much as possible to be literate as well as orally fluent. The one phase of Chinese neglected in FALCON is that of original composition. Writing is the last skill mastered by students of any language, including their native language, and the time required for development of a good written style acceptable to educated Chinese would require many additional months of intensive study. After some consideration we decided that the additional time could not be justified in terms of the loss to other language skills of speaking and reading, skills that will be obviously of more immediate need to American students for the foreseeable future.

After two or three early years of experimentation with various combinations of reading and speaking instruction we have come to a balance of one reading class to two spoken drill sessions per day. This represents not only an optimum amount of time to be spent on profitable learning of reading skills, it also seems to maximize progress in speaking and reading.

We feel that our students have achieved optimal literacy in the year of FALCON. They have learned as much as possible in a year's time. Even if all the day were devoted to reading classes there is no evidence that the group would be able to make significant additional reading progress. There seems to be a point of diminishing returns in reading which means that extra time spent per day does not necessarily mean additional material learned and retained. In other words, it would not improve the reading skills over the year if we cut out a spoken drill session and added another reading class.

There is simply a limit on the number of characters and compounds which can be absorbed in one day, and extra time would be no help. Whether this is a function of fatigue in the visual and reading portion of the nervous system or a correlate of retention and recall processes is a matter for further research. The fact remains that intensive reading training reaches an early daily limit whereas speaking and aural comprehension skills seem not to have such an early point of diminishing returns. Additional speaking drill sessions and language laboratory assignments seem to be beneficial as long as the student has any energy left. With this knowledge in mind we have apportioned our daily time to optimize reading time and maximize speaking time. With minor changes from year to year on the basis of differing strengths of the student groups, we have maintained what we think is the proper balance and results seems to bear us out.

Basic Schedule

Chinese FALCON now consists of 38 weeks of study per year. This follows closely the Cornell academic calender with vacations totaling about three months in January, May, August, and December. Each week consists of five days, Monday through Friday, of six assigned hours per day. These hours are: one reading class, two spoken drill sessions with native speakers, two supervised language laboratory sessions, and one hour of grammar lectures and explanation by a linguist. Saturdays and Sundays are spent in home work and lab time.

Course Design and Pedagogy

Basic to our planning is the combined utilization of native speaker and English speaking linguist. We feel that the students should hear

native level spoken Chinese from the beginning and that little or no spoken Chinese should come from non-native speakers. However we are convinced that the grammar explanations and the reading classes should be conducted in English by persons with a command of Chinese. Thus, in speaking classes the effort is directed toward both comprehension and production with natural Chinese as the goal and with the reference to English equivalents quickly eliminated. In both the active and passive phases of speaking and understanding our goal is to develop an automatic control that bypasses any need for mental translation and two-language encoding. This is perfectly possible in the spoken component and is in fact necessary for anything resembling natural control. Reading is a different matter; here we teach an essentially passive skill which demands familiarity with a much larger vocabulary than does speaking. Any person in any language, including his own native language, has a much larger passive reading vocabulary than his active speaking vocabulary. This fact is programmed into our course design.

Section Size

We have a limit of ten persons in each spoken language drill section. In practice this number usually runs about seven or eight students. In this manner we feel that each student is given the maximum opportunity to perform and observe in terms of other restrictions of staff time and our desire to avoid one-on-one teacher/student situations. In spite of the rather widespread belief that the best learning situation is one student per one teacher, we are convinced that this is not the optimum learning arrangement. The student in a spoken drill session by himself usually is not progressing as well as he thinks he is; the lack of any point of comparison

offered by other students in the same class doing the same things is in fact a negative factor in the learning situation. In one-on-one classes both the student and the teacher frequently tend to relax and work within the speed and content formats set consciously or subconsciously by the student himself. At such a point there is no competition from other students to urge each person on to better work. There is always the serious problem that a single student will automatically seek his own pace which will be somewhat slower than he might be able to do when urged on by the performance of other members in the same class sessions. For this reason we discourage one-on-one classes except for remedial teaching or for specialized training near the end of the FALCON year. Teaching operations elsewhere seem to have hit upon the number of 4 or 5 students as the best number for beginning language classes, a figure that maximizes student-teacher contact, takes advantage of the good effects of competition between class members, and reduces the negative effects of fatigue caused by being the only performer in a well-run one-on-one class. In Cornell FALCON we are forced to plan for an increased number (i.e., a maximum of 10 instead of 5) by the economics of the university language teaching situation and the time restrictions on a limited staff. Nevertheless, we feel that the 7 to 10 member classes which we schedule are receiving the best possible language training commensurate with the conditions set for us by the student and the school.

Differential Progress

Although the class size gives an ideal amount of individual and group attention, we are prepared to schedule extra sessions for individual students when classroom performance indicates that such attention is necessary

In fact, the speed and content of our courses are scheduled only provisionally for a week or two at a time and personal observation by the drill instructors and the rest of the staff is necessary to make any appropriate changes in our scheduling. We find that each year the makeup of the class varies significantly in terms of student talent. This variation often comes out as different problems with different parts of the materials. Thus, one class may be slow in absorbing the phonology while the next class may be slow at certain grammatical concepts appearing later in the year. This means that the two classes would go at different paces during separate times of the year, and our course design must be flexible enough to allow changes when this fact becomes apparent. What this amounts to is maintaining a close watch on class and individual progress in order to make appropriate changes in pace and materials whenever it seems necessary. This control of the pace is in fact the biggest job in the administration of FALCON. The texts, the techniques, and the approach are fairly well established by now. The major role of the director of Chinese FALCON is seeing that each student is proceeding at the fastest pace commensurate with thorough learning and group cohesion. In the event that student abilities become so disparate that it is counterproductive to keep the group together, we are always prepared to split the class into two or more groups in order to avoid the negative effects of having the achievement levels too far apart in the same class. We prefer to avoid such tracking if possible.

Reading vs. Speaking

As mentioned above, the two skills of speaking and reading are kept

intentionally apart in Chinese FALCON. This runs contrary to the popular linguistic theory developed around the time of World War II which said that written language is a modified form of the spoken language and that the study of written language would be benefited by delaying it until a considerable control of the spoken language has been attained. This theory is acceptable as a reaction against the pre-war teaching which often based spoken language work on written literary texts. However, the reversal of the approach simply made writing subordinate to speaking rather than the earlier position which held that the real language was the literature of the artist and that everyday forms of the spoken language were clearly second class and less desirable for the serious student.

Our contention in FALCON is that, although there is clearly and undeniably a close relationship between the written and spoken forms of a given language, these two forms are still different enough to merit separate course design and separate pedagogical approach.

Speaking Component

Speaking is a combined skill requiring both active and passive control of phonology, syntax, and lexicon, while reading is essentially a passive skill which does not require the production of Chinese in any of the three categories of phonology, syntax, and lexicon. This fact alone suggests that it should be possible through careful course design to maximize the return on students' time by weighting the study effort in favor of passive control. In simple terms reading is not an all-skills control while speaking definitely does require such control.

Standard and Non-standard Dialects

Our spoken course takes Peking pu-tong-hua as its starting point although no effort is made to use central city Peking dialect as our only model. The facts of life for present day American students is that they will have minimum opportunity to do the bulk of their Chinese contacts with people from the city of Peking. In fact Americans are more likely to be exposed to Southern Mandarin or Taipei Mandarin and we must see that they are prepared for subdialects of Mandarin or pu-tong-hua. Our present drill staff is made up of two persons from areas near Peking and two persons from the Taipei area. We believe that this form of exposure gives the student a realistic preparation for the type of speaker that he is most likely to meet whether in the Peoples Republic of China, in Taiwan, or among the overseas Chinese. The early problems caused by this lack of total uniformity is more than offset by the end of the first or second month by giving our students the ability to adapt to a wider range of pronunciation than is common among beginning students of Chinese. By the end of about five months we invite speakers from various non-standard dialect areas to give talks to our students. This serves to give the students a great deal of confidence in handling the dialect variation that is so much a part of modern spoken Chinese and at the same time impresses on the student the importance of modelling their own speech as closely as possible to the more acceptable forms of pu-tong-hua spoken in the areas around Peking. Thus, by the end of the year of study, our FALCON students will be trained to speak on a model of Peking pu-tong-hua, but their comprehension will have been trained to adjust to as wide a variety of Chinese speakers as we can assemble on the Cornell campus. In a typical year our students will have heard a

preponderance of Peking pronunciation but they will also have heard and spoken with speakers of Siquan, Yunnan, Taiwan, the Northeast, and other varieties of pu-tong-hua. Also they will have had the same exposure to pu-tong-hua speakers whose first dialect was Cantonese, Amoy, Hakka, or Shanghai. This clearly gives our students a more realistic language background in terms of the wide variety of pronunciations one can expect from pu-tong-hua speakers in a country so vast and diverse as modern China. We will continue this plan of using a base dialect as prime target but always supplying our students with the many other models common throughout China.

Only Chinese Spoken in Drill Sessions

Our design for the spoken classes and drill sessions is to see that the students hear and use spoken Chinese as much as possible Our drill instructors are directed to use English only when it is absolutely impossible to go on in Chinese. In this way the students hear native Chinese spoken from the first day of class and are urged to use all of the drill sessions for spoken Chinese only. The rule for drill sessions is: Ask no questions except those that can be asked in Chinese and the answer understood in Chinese. The instructors and students are asked to save their questions about grammar, vocabulary, etc. until the lecture period when they will meet with an English-speaking linguist. In this lecture period all the questions and problems about the details of Chinese are discussed in English in terms that the students will be sure to understand.

Reading Component

The reading component is designed to move with speed to a stage where the student is reading adult written Chinese. From the first day those

texts are chosen which most closely approximate written Chinese rather than those that are transcriptions of spoken Chinese. Although there is some savings in grammatical and vocabulary learning when the spoken and written texts cover identical material, it is always the case that there is a tremendous loss of time in learning high frequency spoken characters that are low frequency in standard written Chinese. An immediate example of this is found in the first chapters of De Francis' Character Text to Beginning Chinese. A quick glance at the characters to be learned in the first three or four lessons shows a number of final particles and functors that are very low frequency in written Chinese. And the otner characters in these lessons were obviously chosen more for their use in spoken rather than written Chinese. As a result, these savings in vocabulary and grammar rules by duplication of the spoken text in a character text leads to the waste of considerable time in learning low frequency written forms. Even in the De Francis Readers, ostensibly designed specifically for reading, there is still an unacceptable excess of spoken Chinese in the lessons. Unfortunately, the ideal reading text does not exist for the beginning reader stage. All those on the market still show the influence of the linguistic fallacy that reading is simply an extension of the spoken component and should be copied closely after it.

Writing as Too Time Consuming

Frequent arguments are presented for the increase of the writing or composition phase of written Chinese. Some teachers claim that by additional practice and training in composing in Chinese the student will develop firmer control of the characters and be able to move more rapidly through a reading program. In its simplest form this argument is true:

the better one can write, the more one can read. Extending this point it can be said that everything that a student has under active control (that is everything he can produce) is almost certain to be under good passive control as well. The problem comes in the time loss necessary to develop good written Chinese. As in all languages a good command of a written style is the last thing to develop in any student, either in his first language or in any subsequent foreign languages studied. It is one thing to be able to write the characters of the lesson and this skill must be learned for several reasons. It is quite another thing to be able to write a Chinese sentence, paragraph, or longer theme in a style that looks like natural Chinese. Written styles have conventions and traditions that produce a form of language quite different than the spoken. It takes years to perfect and, in fact many people go through their educational experience without developing a satisfactory written style in any language. To write Chinese in anything approaching the level of an educated adult would require several years of special training in well designed writing courses. This is a proper goal in itself, but we have been forced to put writing low on the FALCON priority list simply because the time requirement is prohibitive and the future need for the skill is minimal. Our students are expected to be able to write the characters they have studied, and they should thus be able to write down anything that they can say. But it is fallacious to call this written Chinese.

Reading for Volume of Mature Materials

The time that would be spent learning to write Chinese is then turned back into the reading track. We consider the best approach to reading to be coverage of volume rather than total internalization of less material.

Particularly in the beginning and intermediate reading stages it seems counterintuitive to have intensive training in the handling of childish and artificial written Chinese. These earlier stages should be passed through as quickly as possible in order to get to the mature level of reading at which the adult student will be doing his work. There is no merit at all in having full mastery of texts of the Dick and Jane level or even of the next stage in written texts. These should be looked upon as materials to give initial practice in reading and the same time to get a feel for the differences between spoken and written Chinese.

Reading Skills instead of Word Memorization

Beginning reading is not thought of as an exercise in the memorization of large lists of vocabulary but as the time for exposure to as much text as possible in order to deveolop reading skills as opposed to decoding skills. Of course the vocabulary is necessary for reading and all possible assistance should be given in the accumulation of necessary and high frequency words. However, to date there is not one text published that has been based on relative frequency of compounds in Chinese. De Francis did use character frequency lists in chosing his reading vocabulary. However, he often went on to present the individual characters in many compounds of very low frequency, again increasing the learning load by forcing the student to learn too many less common compounds even though they are made up of high frequency characters.

Given the fact that we have no texts with vocabulary selected on the basis of compound frequency, the best way to cover the common vocabulary is through increased amount of textual material. Since the needed

compound counts are not yet generally available we must make educated guesses as to what constitutes useful vocabulary and make up our beginning and intermediate texts on the basis of these guesses. However, these first two stages are simply practice periods in which reading techniques and skills are developed. Our true goal is to move as quickly as possible into mature, adult written Chinese which is by definition the material used for advanced Chinese. By the advanced stage the students should no longer be reading texts written especially for the learner; he should be reading natural texts written by and for natives. It is at this stage that the needed vocabulary surfaces by virtue of repeated occurrence in the reading material. Here is where the principle of increased volume of reading begins to pay off because now the student has the skill and experience in covering larger amounts of written texts, and vocabulary is being learned through exposure to the material. The decisions about frequency are solved for us in terms of number of occurrences in a given text rather than subjective selections by textbook writers. This function will continue as the student moves from the classroom into his own research where his specialized vocabulary will grow as he does more and more reading in the discipline of his choice.

Beginning Readers for the Adult

This is not an argument against the utility of beginning and intermediate reading texts, but rather a proposal to prepare them differently and to use them differently in class. Spoken texts have for some time been designed on the premise that students can speak a simple but still adult form of the language from the very beginning. We no longer need be faced with infantile dialogs in beginning spoken texts but can expect sentences and conversations that an adult might use.

This obvious advantage has not yet been extended to the reading texts. In reading we are still bound by the mistaken idea that adult learners should follow the path of children in learning to read, but this is not true and in fact it slows the learning process unnecessarily. The chief advantage of a modern course design, in both speaking and reading, is the fact that we can design a course for adults and spare them the task of repeating the child's learning process.

This criticism of the childish approach to reading is one that can be leveled directly against most of our modern reading texts. These books are clearly guilty of treating the students like children as any glance at the subject matter and vocabulary will prove.

It is apparently difficult for textbook designers to get away from the feeling that beginning adult students must somehow recapitulate the child learning process. This is in part a confusion of simplicity with childishness. As writers of speaking texts have discovered some time ago, it is possible to write a simple conversation without making it sound like five-year old children talking. Our conversational texts now can be geared to the adult students by vocabulary and subject matter selection. However, the reading texts have not been able to make the same adjustment. The two major mistakes in modern reading text design are either 1) to write the texts in the simplest form of the <u>spoken</u> language, or 2) to write children's stories in oversimplified texts. The first mistake fails to recognize that written Chinese (like all written languages) is significantly different from spoken in construction, vocabulary, and content, and that little or no time is really saved by taking the student through an intermediate stage written in a simplified, spoken style.

The second mistake fails to serve the adult student because it forces him to learn a style and vocabulary which is inappropriate to his age group and to his future use of the language. Writers of these texts seem to feel that words like "wolf", "mule", "straw hut", "rabbit", etc. are all high frequency words in adult reading. This is of course wrong; simply because all children know these and many other words in the same category it has been assumed that adults should know them. This simply ignores the major difference between child and adult subject matter and thus adds a large number of relatively useless characters to be learned by an already overburdened adult student.

Problems with Available Reading Texts

These two flaws in modern written text design, i.e., writing spoken Chinese and writing children's stories, contribute to a considerable waste of student time when we should be giving them help of a more positive kind. I see the major problem as a lack of a satisfactory beginning reading text. This should be a completely new work, based on frequency counts of compounds found in adult expository prose, and designed to prepare a student to move as soon as possible into a good intermediate reading text such as Twenty Lectures in Chinese Culture. The beginning text can and should contain sentences of the type that might be found in a newspaper text but much simpler than the average run of connected text in a newspaper. In other words, newspapers contain occasional simple sentences of the kind I would select for the beginning text, but adult prose is characterized by infrequent use of such sentences while interspersing them in a larger proportion of longer and more complicated sentences. These short and simple sentences from newspapers could be used

as the guide for composing the entire beginning reader leaving us without one spoken language sentence, without a choice type question, without the plethora of sentence final particles which are so common in spoken and so rare in written Chinese, etc. This means that the student is approaching written Chinese as a slightly different kind of Chinese, and that is exactly the kind of realistic approach which moves more rapidly toward reading control and which in the long run saves time by weeding out the less frequent characters and compounds.

Textual Needs

Our needs in the United States are first for a beginning reading text which introduces both long and short form characters in some appropriate sequence and in adult style. Next we need a companion text to Twenty Lectures in Chinese Culture, one that is written in simplified characters and from the Chinese Communist point of view full of the basic history and terminology needed as the background of any future specialist as well as the student who intends to be wellrounded in all things Chinese.

The Quantum Leap in Reading

I am convinced by my experiences of the last decade that we need not ask the student to plod methodically through a sequence of carefully graded reading texts which take him slowly through a long series of artificial materials and arbitrarily selected vocabulary. This spends too much time training for mastery of unnatural language and misses the point that beginning and intermediate texts should simply be devices to move us as rapidly as possible into mature, adult Chinese written by Chinese for Chinese. If the beginning text is properly designed the

student will get an early feel for the differences between what he is learning to say and what he is learning to read. As soon as there is some awareness of this distinction we should be able to move to an intermediate text like Twenty Lectures. This of course means that progress may be initially slow in the more complicated text. In fact there is a touch of the inductive method in my proposals. But the quantum leap from a beginning text to Twenty Lectures and from Twenty Lectures to mature Chinese is absorbed quickly by motivated students and the path to reading control is both shortened and sweetened. The sweetening is of course the concession to the students' age and maturity that they appreciate at once as we move into adult materials and away from the Chinese equivalent of the primary school story. The effect on student motivation is always clear and much negative student reaction in the past can be traced precisely to a set of materials that are more appropriate for children than for young adults.

English Spoken in the Reading Class

Much has been said about the need to get the reading classes conducted fully in spoken Chinese. On the face of it this seems like a logical and unarguable effort to improve the students' spoken control. However, the point that this argument misses is that speaking is done at the loss of reading control until much later in a student's Chinese language course. The reading course should be designed for maximum reading control in the shortest possible time. This is not done with the spoken Chinese control that students have during the first two or three years of their study. Typically the written content is too simple and the vocabulary of the student is too meager to make an acceptable topic

of conversation. The result is a stumbling around to find alternative vocabulary when the student is lucky to have a single way of expressing the concept. In fact the most that can be usually expected is that the student repeat what the written text has said and in precisely the same vocabulary and constructions as that of the written text. This gives us no feel for whether the student has grasped the nuance of the written text, a text that if it is well designed with emphasis on passive skills may well be beyond the difficulty and complexity of his spoken control. What we must realize here is that speaking Chinese in a reading class is good for speaking but is not the best way to cover the reading material. English spoken at this stage insures that the student understands exactly what the concepts are and permits a faster rate of progress through more material. And, in the final analysis, reading skills are developed more through exposure to large amounts of material than through intensive rereading of small amounts of material. We should work in the reading class to get the most precise understanding and passive control of the material in the fastest possible way. Spoken Chinese is another class with another pedagogical approach. Unfortunately in many schools there is so little time alloted to speaking that it is important to use any available time to improve speaking skills. In such cases we should not fool ourselves into thinking that we are maximizing the speaking as well as the reading skills but simply spreading them out over the available time. The best program is the one which recognizes that reading and speaking are separate tracks which require separate pedagogy and course design.

Vocabulary Glosses in English

This same sort of thinking would argue against the desire to start

at an early stage with vocabulary glosses in Chinese. It is mistakenly assumed that this will give the student a head start by increasing the amount of reading material. Again, the effect is to simply limit the precise understanding of a term or construction by forcing the student to understand it within the limited vocabulary which he has at that stage. As an exercise in how to use Chinese-Chinese dictionaries we could support the effort, but as a device to help reading progress this is a counter-productive move which very likely means that the student will go on for some time before through additional contact he finally derives the precise nuances of large numbers of terms. A skill in the use of Chinese-Chinese dictionaries is of course important in itself and must be learned at some stage. However, this is clearly a matter that should be left until later when the student has the range of vocabulary which will permit him to profit from such Chinese definitions. Otherwise, what we generally have is simply a double dictionary process in which the student is forced to treat the primary gloss as another task in dictionary use or else end up with an overly vague concept of the meaning of the terms. For passive skills such as reading and aural understanding, English is a perfectly fine, in fact maybe the only, device for insuring that the student has maximum feel and understanding for the terms in question. The elimination of the encoding operations is one that comes with continued use and not through the artificial device of putting the gloss in Chinese too early in the learning process. Again, as always, our course design and material development should be planned in ways to help rather than to slow up the learning process.

An English equivalent is necessary for comprehension at early stages

and we should supply this equivalent. It is only through continued use and repeated exposure that the English gloss fades and the student moves into a more native and natural control of the language. For most of the students, this is a much later stage of their Chinese training. We have often heard the beginning student way "Well, I know what it means in Chinese but I can't put it into English". This is of course, nonsense. In the first three or four years of study there is no reason for such a thing to happen unless we have in fact created the stituation by trying to hasten the process of "Thinking in Chinese". This usually ends up meaning poor understanding of the Chinese concepts and inability to explain it in any known language.

In other words, we propose to give the student the most possible help in reading larger volumes of selected materials, thus speeding up the reading process. We design classroom time to give the fullest and most precise understanding of the text. Each word, sentence, and paragraph should be completely comprehensible to the student and fully translatable into his first language before we feel he has understood the entire passage. There is little realistic expectation that a beginning student can do this in a foreign language until he is into its most advanced phases.

Speeding up Understanding

This does not mean that the student will continue to decode and translate into English. On the contrary, it means that he is developing totally reliable concepts for each term and sentence he comes across, and in this way he more quickly gets the precision in dealing with the target language, leading to real understanding and comfortable use of the new reading

materials. The early use of Chinese glosses and the attempt to grasp the Chinese text in Chinese terms means that the student is floundering in generalizations forced on him by his own inadequate grasp of Chinese vocabulary. An English equivalent at this stage is more precise and faster. Course design must take these factors into consideration and program the course work to separate reading and speaking in a way which offers the most advantage to each.

Short-and Full-form Characters

For the American student it will be necessary to learn both long and short forms of the characters. It is impossible and even unimportant at this point to say whether the long form or the short form should be first and most emphasized. The important thing is that at the beginning stages it is necessary for a literate student of Chinese to be able to handle both scripts. Later decisions about area of concentration may lead an individual student into one script at the neglect of the other but this move will come after the student has made some career decisions for his academic future. In any event, as course designer it is important for us to prepare the students for maximum access to everything written in Chinese. They must become wellrounded and fully equipped scholars. Nothing should be beyond their grasp simply on political or governmental grounds.

Romanization Systems

Along these same lines it is important that the use of a system of romanization not become bogged down in a political argument. The matter is one that should be approached on more practical grounds and ultimately

turns on points of availability of texts in one romanization, availability of research tools in that romanization, the general utility of one romanization over another, and the likelihood of future usefulness. On all these counts pinyin seems now to be playing the most important role and the most likely candidate for general use around the world. At present our best language texts, most of our best dictionaries, and many other research tools are appearing in pinyin and there is clear indication that this ascendency will continue into the future. At present it even looks possible that the characters may in fact some day be abolished in favor of pinyin. As more and more institutions adopt pinyin it becomes more important for every scholar of Chinese to have it under control. For the beginning language student it is now absolutely indispensible. Short of a major turnaround by Peking there seems to be no other contender for first position in this line.

This does not mean that pinyin will take care of all the needs of a student of Chinese language and culture. Because of the earlier mass of materials published using other romanizations and the many libraries and research tools that use such things as Wade-Giles or Yale romanization, it will for a long time be necessary for those in Chinese studies to be familiar with a number of other forms of transcribing Chinese. At present there are several very good dictionaries which make use of the so-called bo-po-mo-fo system in ways which facilitate study for those who take the time to learn this system. In any practical sense pinyin is the only present system that needs to be learned for active control; the others need only be controlled passively in order to make use of dictionaries or similar materials.

The main point that must be stressed is that the beginning American student of Chinese language absolutely must learn a romanization system and use it in all his spoken language course work. There is an unfortunate tendency to switch to characters at a premature stage in the spoken language class and thereby lose all the pronunciation help that the romanizations give. The characters are totally useless in supplying any clues as to their correct pronunciation and any shift away from romanization means a loss in accuracy of pronunciation. This seems so obviously true that one wonders why it has to be said over again every year. However, there is still a tendency to view the romanizations as something foreign, an unnecessary intermediate learning phase which blocks early access to the true Chinese as written in characters. For those who already have full control of the characters and their pronunciation this is certainly true, but for the most part this applies only to native Chinese and never to foreign students of the language. It is also true that the foreign student should never switch away from romanization to characters in his speaking class. Such a switch will mean a loss of accuracy in pronunciation, and since the materials thus read will be more appropriately spoken Chinese, they will mean only a small gain in control of true written Chinese.

Classical Chinese

A final note should be added about the importance of some exposure to Classical Chinese. Although FALCON is a modern colloquial course, we do give 14 or 15 hours of instruction in classical forms. This is seen as an important part of the reading component in that it prepares the

student for easier understanding of such things as chengyu or similar constructions, common in modern colloquial but based on a more classical grammar. Our text for this training is the Xiao Jing (the Classic of Filial Piety).